

**Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist:**

[Race to the Top](#) Deadline Approaches

Regents Approve RIDE [Strategic Plan](#)

RIDE Sets Protocol for [Intervention](#) in Lowest-Achieving Schools

**From the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE):**

Review Requested of Regulations on [Restraints and Seclusion](#) –  
*Response Required*

**From other state agencies:**

**Other:**

Rhode Island [Civil Rights Roundtable](#) to Hold Forum on Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Education

**Attachments to this field memo:**

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**Notes from Commissioner Gist:**

**Race to the Top Deadline Approaches**

We are getting close to our Race to the Top deadline, and we are working very hard to submit the best possible proposal to bring to Rhode Island these valuable funds. As we near the deadline, I want to assure you that we have based the contents of our proposal on the Strategic Plan for Transforming Rhode Island Education and on the framework for the Race to the Top proposal, which we have posted on our Web site:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/commissioner/DOCUMENTS/2009/RI%20R2T%20Framework.pdf>

As I wrote in a memorandum to you yesterday, the near-final proposal will be available for public review and feedback on Monday and Tuesday.

Here is a summary of the memorandum I sent to you yesterday:

- **Collaboration with local Unions**

- Please know that my R2T team and I have been engaging with state union leadership. Our conversations have been productive. We are hopeful that the state union leadership will support our R2T proposal and encourage local union leaders to support it as well.
- Your district's engagement with its unions is extremely important. I know that you have been working diligently to engage your unions in R2T discussions. I ask that you continue this effort: Sit down with your union leadership to go over the MOU, and specifically address any areas that the unions may be concerned with (for example, Teach for America or charter schools as a strategy).

- Please know that we have approved an extension for state and local union leaders to sign on to support the R2T proposal. We have asked to know of their support no later than 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, January 13. **However, the deadline for sign-on for districts has not changed. We must know the status of all of our districts by this Friday, January 8, in order for us to flesh out the budget for our R2T application over this coming weekend. You will still have the ability to opt out by the morning of January 13.**

- **Application Reviews**

- On Tuesday, January 12, we have invited you, members of the Learning First Alliance, and R2T Steering Committee members to participate in one of four two-hour review sessions (8:00 A.M. – 10:00 A.M., 10:15 A.M. – 12:15 P.M., 12:30 P.M. – 2:30 P.M., 2:45 PM – 4:45 P.M.). These review sessions are RSVP-only. If you have not RSVPed but would like to participate, please email [Nicole.Shaffer@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Nicole.Shaffer@ride.ri.gov). Nicole will be sending confirmation emails (with location) by tomorrow to those who have RSVPed (please don't be concerned if you haven't yet received confirmation). Each review session will include some time for reading, a brief presentation of the application by RIDE staff, and facilitated discussion among the participants.
- On Monday, January 11 and Tuesday, January 12, the entire education community and the general

public is invited to read and provide written comment on our R2T application. We will have copies of the application available at RIDE (255 Westminster Street, Providence) in the PAFF auditorium from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Written feedback forms will be provided. The application copies cannot be removed from the room. No RSVP is required to participate.

For those of you who have signed or will sign an MOU, I encourage you to review this MOU with your labor leaders, as I would very much welcome their support for our Race to the Top proposal. **If labor leaders agree to sign in support of the proposal after you have submitted your MOU, either:**

- 1. You may generate a new copy of the MOU that the labor leader can sign and that you can resubmit to RIDE, or**
- 2. The labor leader can come in to RIDE and sign the MOU that you have already submitted. (Contact: [Melissa.cabral@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Melissa.cabral@ride.ri.gov))**

## **Regents Approve RIDE Strategic Plan**

Yesterday, the Board of Regents approved our Strategic Plan for Transforming Rhode Island Education, which is one of the foundational documents for our Race to the Top proposal. This plan will guide our work over the next three years, as we prepare our students for success in college, careers, and life. A lot of hard work from the entire education field contributed to this document, and I very much appreciate the comments,

suggestions, and feedback that I have received from you, both in one-on-one conversations and at several RISSA meetings.

We will prepare a final version of the plan for publication, but in the interim we have posted on our Web site the document that the Regents approved:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/news/pressrels/2010\\_PressReleases/RIDE%20Strategic%20Plan%2001-07-10\\_BORapproved.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/news/pressrels/2010_PressReleases/RIDE%20Strategic%20Plan%2001-07-10_BORapproved.pdf)

## **RIDE Sets Protocol for Intervention in Lowest-Achieving Schools**

At last night's meeting, I also presented to the Regents the protocol we have developed for intervention in the persistently lowest-achieving schools. This protocol specifies how we will identify the lowest-achieving schools and how we will implement the intervention and school-reform models. We have based these models directly on guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the ED overview of the Race to the Top application.

We have posted this protocol on our Web site, at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/RIDE/Docs/Protocol\\_for\\_Interventions.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/RIDE/Docs/Protocol_for_Interventions.pdf)

On Monday, we intend to announce the first six schools identified for intervention. These schools are in the Central Falls and Providence districts.

**From RIDE:**

## **Review Requested of Regulations on Restraints and Seclusion – *Response Required***

Please see this request from the Office of Student, Community & Academic Supports:

States have recently be asked to review their policies and procedures regarding restraints and seclusion. In an effort to assess the effectiveness of Rhode island's current regulations, we are asking your cooperation in providing RIDE with some information. Below is a link to a short list of evidence I need you to provide for the RIDE contact person by January 30th, 2010. Below you will also find a link to the full regulations, for your review. Many Thanks.

The url for the list of evidence needed is:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Special\\_Populations/Documents/Restraint%20Request.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Special_Populations/Documents/Restraint%20Request.pdf)

The url for the complete Physical Restraint Regulations document is:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Regents/Docs/RegentsRegulations/PHYS%20REST%20REGS%20FINAL.pdf>

### **Other:**

## **Rhode Island Civil Rights Roundtable to Hold Forum on Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Education**

We have received this notice from the Rhode Island Civil Rights Roundtable:

Each year, the Rhode Island Civil Rights Roundtable celebrates the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with an educational forum on current civil rights issues. This year, the forum theme is “Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Rhode Island Education.”

The event will be held on Sunday, January 17th, at 4:00pm at the University of Rhode Island, Providence Feinstein Campus, Paff Auditorium, 80 Washington St., Providence. The event is free and the public is welcome to attend.

Speakers include Providence Mayor David Cicilline; David V. Abbott, Deputy Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education; Elaine Budish, Rhode Island KidsCount; Monica Teixeira De Sousa, Southern NE School of Law; Dr. Kenneth Wong, Brown University; and Jennifer Wood, Office of the Lieutenant Governor. We will also hear from RICJ Youth Action Council member Jim Albert about youths’ lives at school. A brief legislative update will be offered by Representative Anastasia Williams, Chair of the Minority Legislative Caucus and several community advocates.

The event will end with music of the Prism of Praise Community Gospel Choir, and light refreshments and socializing.

The event is co-sponsored by co-sponsored by the University of Rhode Island Providence Campus and by Rhode Island for Community & Justice. More information is available on the RICJ website at [www.ricj.org](http://www.ricj.org)